

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BONN 01383 01 OF 03 241754Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 241740Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4996
INFO USMISSION USBERLIN
USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BONN 01383

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, GW, WB, UR,
SUBJECT: THE SOMBER GERMAN MOOD ON DETENTE

REFS: (A) (76) BONN 11061; (B) (76) BONN 11749

1. POLITICAL AND PROFESSIONAL FIGURES WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE WEST GERMAN GOVERNMENT ARE NOW MUCH MORE PESSIMISTIC THAN SIX MONTHS AGO ABOUT THE IMMEDIATE PROSPECTS FOR GERMAN DETENTE POLICIES. ALTHOUGH SCHMIDT ASSURED THE BUNDESTAG LAST WEEK THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO PURSUE DETENTE, FRG OFFICIALS SEE FEW ATTRACTIVE AVENUES AHEAD.

2. THESE POINTS WERE UNDERLINED IN RECENT CONVERSATIONS HELD BY GUENTHER VAN WELL AND KLAUS BLECH, RESPECTIVELY POLITICAL DIRECTOR AND PLANNING DIRECTOR OF THE FRG

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BONN 01383 01 OF 03 241754Z

FOREIGN MINISTRY, WITH THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR. THE GERMAN OFFICIALS PAINTED A MUCH GRIMMER PICTURE THAN THE RATHER OPTIMISTIC SCENARIOS THAT THEY HAD OUTLINED LAST SUMMER (SEE REFTELS).

3. NEITHER VAN WELL NOR BLECH SAW MUCH CHANCE IN THE NEAR FUTURE FOR PROGRESS IN DETENTE AND, MOST SPECIFI-

CALLY, IN GERMAN-SOVIET RELATIONS, FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

--THE SOVIET UNION NOW APPEARS TO BE PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH THE INTERNAL PROBLEMS OF THE BLOC.

--AFTER RECENT EVENTS IN BERLIN, THERE IS LITTLE PUBLIC SUPPORT IN THE FRG FOR ANY CONCESSIONS TO THE SOVIETS, EITHER BY OFFERING CREDITS OR IN SUCH LONG-STANDING NEGOTIATING AREAS AS MBFR.

--SCHMIDT AND FOREIGN MINISTER GENSCHER ARE SPENDING MUCH OF THEIR TIME AND POLITICAL ENERGY ON DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, LEAVING THEM LITTLE TIME OR INCLINATION TO CONCENTRATE AND COMPROMISE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS. SCHMIDT IS SUBJECT TO MANY CONFLICTING PRESSURES, WITH GENSCHER URGING CAUTION AND BRANDT URGING PROGRESS, AND HAS NOT YET RESOLVED THOSE PRESSURES.

--THE SOVIET BUREAUCRACY FOR GERMAN AFFAIRS, HEADED BY GROMYKO AND BONDARENKO, APPEARS TO BE TOTALLY NEGATIVE. IT IS ALWAYS PUSHING FOR GERMAN CONCESSIONS AND CITING ALLEGED GERMAN VIOLATIONS OF THE LETTER OR SPIRIT OF EARLIER AGREEMENTS, AND IT NEVER APPEARS ABLE TO OFFER ANY SOVIET CONCESSIONS OR TO TALK ALONG ANY CONCEPTUAL LINES. SUCH SOVIET OFFICIALS AS ZAGLADIN, WHO APPEAR TO WANT PROGRESS, TALK TO BRANDT AND BAHR RATHER THAN TO GENSCHER, THUS NULLIFYING THEIR OWN EFFECTIVENESS AS INTERMEDIARIES BECAUSE GENSCHER REGARDS
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BONN 01383 01 OF 03 241754Z

WHAT THEY SAY WITH SUSPICION.

4. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, THERE IS NOW LITTLE PROGRESS BEING MADE ON PLANS FOR THE BREZHNEV VISIT. FOREIGN MINISTRY PAPERS ON THE VISIT HAVE RESTED MANY WEEKS ON GENSCHER'S DESK. UNLESS THE MOOD IN BONN CHANGES, THERE SEEMS LITTLE CHANCE THAT THE VISIT WILL GENERATE ANY BREAKTHROUGH IN GERMAN-SOVIET RELATIONS, IF IT EVEN TAKES PLACE.

5. SOVIET AMBASSADOR FALIN MADE A SIMILAR COMMENT TO THE AMBASSADOR, STATING THAT NO DATE FOR THE BREZHNEV VISIT HAD YET BEEN FIXED AND SUGGESTING THAT THE SOVIETS WERE NOT IN A HURRY FOR THE VISIT. HE SAID PROSPECTS FOR THE VISIT HAD BEEN SET BACK BY SOME RECENT "UNHELPFUL" REMARKS OF GENSCHER'S, AND HE COMPLAINED THAT THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT, UNLIKE THE AMERICAN, DID NOT

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PAGE 01 BONN 01383 02 OF 03 241756Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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AMEMBASSY LONDON
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S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 03 BONN 01383

EXDIS

SHOW A "CONSTRUCTIVE" ATTITUDE. WHEN THE AMBASSADOR
STRESSED OUR CONCERN AT GDR ACTIONS AROUND BERLIN, FALIN
OBSERVED THEY SHOULD NOT BE EXAGGERATED OR OVERDRAMATIZED.

6. YET BERLIN, DESPITE FALIN'S OBSERVATIONS, APPEARS TO
BE AT THE CENTER OF MANY OF THE CURRENT PROBLEMS IN
GERMAN-SOVIET RELATIONS, WITH THE FRG INSTITUTIONS IN
BERLIN AND THE FRG ROLE IN REPRESENTING BERLIN ABROAD
APPEARING TO PLAY A DOMINANT ROLE IN THE THINKING OF BOTH
SIDES. BLECH TOLD THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR THAT THE
GERMAN POLICY OF CONTINUING TO ESTABLISH FURTHER LINKS
WITH BERLIN, THOUGH PROVIDED FOR IN THE QUADRIPARTITE
AGREEMENT, MAY HAVE BEEN MISGUIDED SINCE IT INCREASED
SOVIET SUSPICIONS AND MAY HAVE STRENGTHENED THE HANDS OF
THE ELEMENTS IN THE SOVIET UNION OPPOSED TO DETENTE. YET
HE SAID THAT THERE SEEMED LITTLE WAY OUT TO BE FOUND.

7. BLECH CITED AN INCIDENT THAT HAD TAKEN PLACE IN NEW
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BONN 01383 02 OF 03 241756Z

YORK LAST FALL, AS THE GERMAN AND SOVIET DELEGATIONS DISCUSSED BERLIN. WHEN VAN WELL, ATTEMPTING TO OPEN A SERIOUS DIALOGUE ABOUT BERLIN AFFAIRS, HAD ASKED THE SOVIETS TO DEFINE PRECISELY WHAT KINDS OF FEDERAL INSTITUTIONS IN BERLIN THEY REGARDED AS IMPROPER, KVITSINSKIY ON THE SOVIET SIDE HAD SNEERED: "JUST LOOK THROUGH ANY TELEPHONE DIRECTORY." VAN WELL HAD EXPLODED, SAYING HE WOULD NOT TALK SERIOUSLY WHEN CONFRONTED WITH THAT KIND OF ATTITUDE, ACCORDING TO BLECH'S ACCOUNT.

8. NONETHELESS, A NUMBER OF GERMAN OFFICIALS SAY THAT THE CULTURAL AGREEMENT, WITH ITS BERLIN CLAUSE, COULD BE MADE ACCEPTABLE FOR SIGNING BY BOTH SIDES THOUGH IT IS NOT PERFECT EITHER FROM THE GERMAN OR THE PARTY SOVIET STANDPOINT. THE DIFFICULTY APPEARS TO BE THAT NEITHER MAY BE READY TO FACE THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF JUSTIFYING THE CONCESSIONS IT MADE TO BRING ABOUT AGREEMENT.

9. ANOTHER ISSUE, OF COURSE, REMAINS FRG-GDR RELATIONS. SOME GERMAN POLITICAL AND INTELLECTUAL FIGURES HAVE TOLD US THAT THEY SUSPECT THE GDR INSTITUTED THE RECENT NEW PROCEDURES AROUND BERLIN LARGELY IN ORDER TO TORPEDO FRG-SOVIET DETENTE, KNOWING FULL WELL THAT GERMAN PUBLIC OPINION COULD NOT TOLERATE FRG DETENTE WITH MOSCOW WHILE THE GDR MADE TROUBLE AROUND BERLIN. THEY HAVE TOLD US THAT THE GDR, AWARE THAT IT IS OFTEN CALLED UPON TO PAY A PRICE IN SOVIET-FRG COMPROMISES, WISHED TO ARREST DETENTE, AND THAT THE SOVIETS AGREED TO THE NEW MEASURES WITHOUT HAVING APPARENTLY RECOGNIZED THE COSTS IN WEST GERMAN PUBLIC OPINION - OR PERHAPS HAVING CALCULATED THAT THE GERMANS NEEDED TO BE BROUGHT UP SHORT. THIS GDR ATTITUDE PRESENTS A PARTICULAR DIFFICULTY FOR THE FRG, BECAUSE WEST GERMAN PUBLIC OPINION REACTS SPASTICALLY TO EAST GERMAN MEASURES AGAINST OR AROUND BERLIN.

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SECRET

PAGE 03 BONN 01383 02 OF 03 241756Z

10. DESPITE ALL THIS, A NUMBER OF GERMAN OFFICIALS, INCLUDING VAN WELL, BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD LIKE TO MAKE PROGRESS IN DETENTE JUST AS SCHMIDT WOULD. THEY BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIETS FIND IT DIFFICULT, HOWEVER, TO PIN-POINT AN ISSUE ON WHICH BREAKTHROUGHS CAN BE MADE, ESPECIALLY SINCE SO MANY UNCOMPROMISING POSITIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN DURING THE RECENT NEGOTIATING HISTORY. THEY

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PAGE 01 BONN 01383 03 OF 03 241759Z
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S E C R E T SECTION 03 OF 03 BONN 01383

EXDIS

ALSO FIND IT HARD EVEN TO SELECT ISSUES WHERE THE FRG
CAN MAKE CONCESSIONS, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE SOVIET
BUREAUCRACY APPEARS TO THEM TO BE IN A MOOD TO SWALLOW
ALL CONCESSIONS WITHOUT RECIPROCITY.

11. IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND THAT THESE GLOOMY
ASSESSMENTS MAY REFLECT ONLY A PASSING SITUATION. THERE
ARE A NUMBER OF OBJECTIVE FACTORS THAT WORK FOR BETTER
FRG-SOVIET TIES, ESPECIALLY IN THE AREA OF MUTUAL TRADE.
MOREOVER, ASIDE FROM THE DISPUTE ABOUT BERLIN,
MOSCOW-BONN RELATIONS DO NOT STRIKE US AS BEING IN SUCH
A DIFFICULT STATE. SOME WAY WILL HAVE TO BE FOUND
TO RESOLVE THE BERLIN ISSUE IN CONNECTION WITH THE
THREE IMPENDING AGREEMENTS, EITHER BY COMING TO SOME
ACCORD OR BY SETTING THE AGREEMENTS ASIDE UNTIL AFTER
THE BREZHNEV VISIT AND EVEN BEYOND. THE KALININGRAD
POWER PLANT IS STILL MENTIONED FROM TIME TO TIME, AND
MIGHT PROVIDE A SPRINGBOARD TO A BETTER MOOD. MOREOVER,
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SECRET

PAGE 02 BONN 01383 03 OF 03 241759Z

BRANDT AND BAHR KEEP PUSHING MBFR ALTHOUGH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY ASSERTS THAT NOTHING NEW CAN BE DONE IN THIS AREA WITHOUT GENSCHER'S AGREEMENT (WHICH THEY REGARD AS UNLIKELY).

12. TO A CONSIDERABLE DEGREE, FREQUENTLY STRESSED BY GERMAN OFFICIALS HERE, THE FUTURE COURSE OF SOVIET-FRG RELATIONS DEPENDS ON THE UNITED STATES. A NUMBER OF GERMANS HAVE TOLD US THAT A POSITIVE AMERICAN-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP WOULD HELP IMPROVE THE CLIMATE FOR DETENTE ALL OVER THE WORLD, MAKING IT EASIER FOR THE SOVIET AS WELL AS THE GERMAN GOVERNMENTS TO JUSTIFY CONCESSIONS TO EACH OTHER IN THEIR OWN DOMESTIC DIALOGUE (PROVIDED, OF COURSE, THAT THE AGREEMENTS REACHED BETWEEN US AND THE SOVIETS DO NOT THEMSELVES BECOME CONTROVERSIAL). THEY DOUBT THAT MUCH WILL HAPPEN IN FRG-SOVIET RELATIONS UNTIL THE COURSE OF AMERICAN RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION BECOMES CLEAR AND UNTIL THAT COURSE BEGINS TO INFLUENCE THE POLITICAL DIALOGUE ELSEWHERE.
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